

EACC NEWS

The East Asia Christian Conference is an organ of continuing fellowship and co-operation among the Churches and Christian Councils in East Asia.

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LAY EVANGELISM SUCCEEDS

MANILA - Church leaders meeting at the Philippines Congress on Evangelism recently, have been so encouraged by the experiment in lay evangelistic groups that they have decided to work together in a five-year programme with the goal of establishing 10,000 Lay Evangelistic Bible Groups by the end of 1973.

In a report reaching the EACC recently the Rev. Fred M. Magbauna, one of the leaders of the Philippine delegation to the Asia-South Pacific Congress on Evangelism in Singapore in 1968, said that the Lay Evangelistic Group Studies (LEGS) began three years ago and had church leaders from fifty denominations and organizations working together in the programme. The success of the endeavour is measured by the growth of churches in specific areas. In some instances where the small groups had challenged members to evangelize their communities it is reported that church growth has quadrupled, he said.

The emphasis in LEGS within the group is the study of selected passages of the Bible and prayer, handled in such a way as to be relevant to the sceptical and unbelieving. Questions are studied and discussed openly with a leader who guides, but does not preach, and prayer is stressed to underline the truth that human intelligence alone is insufficient to understand the things of God. The structure of LEGS provides basically for a relationship where people join a small fellowship circle and feel Christian love. The problem of follow-up and nurture is automatically carried on by the group as it continues to meet.

The National Association of Filipino Evangelists felt that they had learned several valuable lessons in the experiment. The cost in both time and money is minimal compared with mass evangelism and mass media, as lay men and women pay their own transport to meetings which took no more than 40 minutes a week. The Filipino church need not imitate the techniques of missionaries for successful proclamation of the Gospel, the group discovered. They found that nearly all growing churches in the Philippines have such small groups meeting. They believe that coordination of the groups was necessary to encourage one another and give opportunity for converts to make public confession and help them become a part of the church. They stressed that group meetings must be an integral part of the total church programme but not a substitute for Church prayer meeting or worship services.

Dr. Chandu Ray, Executive Director for the Coordinating Office for Asian Evangelism, Singapore, says of the Filipino development: "The strategic importance of using lay people should be readily apparent. Masses of people are undoubtedly ready to respond to the message of the Gospel right now, if it can be presented with personal, loving, commendation by a dedicated layman."

CONTINUATION COMMITTEE TO MEET IN SPECIAL SESSION

BANGKOK - The Continuation Committee, full-time Staff and Officers of the East Asia Christian Conference will be meeting in special session at Singapore's YMCA Centre from August 28-31. They will receive the report of the Policy and Structure Committee, take actions on issues arising from it, and also make preparations for the next Assembly.

By a majority vote of the Continuation Committee, taken by correspondence, the next Assembly of the EACC will be held in 1973. (EACC News, June 15, 1971)

The Continuation Committee, which would normally meet only once between Assemblies, is expected in this special session to take steps to meet the changing needs of the EACC during the intervening time.

The full agenda will also include consideration of the proposals for amendments to the Constitution, Rules and Agreed Procedures and Programme of Work. Financial issues and the authorization of the programme budget will also be acted upon. Acting Chairman Bishop Chiu Ban It, Singapore, will preside over the meeting.

A meeting of the full-time Staff members is to be held preceding the Continuation meeting from August 23-25. The Special Ecumenical Fund Committee will meet on August 26, and the Finance Committee on August 27.

The Rev. Larry Cheah, Youth Secretary of EACC, Malaysia, will be in charge of local arrangements. The Singapore branch of the Council of Churches of Malaysia and Singapore will hold an Ecumenical Tea at the Chinese YMCA for the EACC participants during the meetings.

In a communication to the member churches and councils of the EACC, the General Secretary said: "The formation of the EACC was formally proposed in 1957 as an organ of continuing fellowship and cooperation among the churches and Christian councils in Asia including Australia and New Zealand. After nearly a decade and a half of its existence, a thorough reflection on its experience and a corporate waiting upon God in the further orientation of its strategy and structure becomes absolutely necessary."

"The work at the forthcoming sessions of the Continuation Committee will need, in this respect, the prayers of all EACC members, that those who deliberate may be granted wisdom, love and power of the Holy Spirit," he concluded.

WSCF ASSESS WORK

TOZANSO, JAPAN - The YMCA International Youth Centre on the foothills of Mt. Fuji near Tokyo was the venue of the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) Executive-Committee's third annual meeting for the current quadrennium. The eight-day meeting concluded on July 10.

General Secretary Risto Lehtonen outlined in a comprehensive way the present "crisis of the Federation". He enumerated the crisis as political, institutional and spiritual.

He acknowledged a "crisis situation for the Federation" and called the world body back to its centre--"Faith in Jesus Christ as the source of our common work, or we have nothing in common", to face openly the transforming possibility of the institutional crisis and to come to grips with it, according to the specific tasks of the Federation. He asserted that the issue in the political crisis is really on what the meaning of liberation is and not a political division.

The twenty voting members from Asia, Africa, Europe, Middle East, Latin America and North America, and consultants numbering as many more, reviewed the past years of regionalisation which began in 1968 and had been a natural process in the development of the WSCF strengthening the movements at the grass roots level. The role of a central office in Geneva was debated.

Preliminary plans were made for the General Assembly to be held at Addis Ababa in December 1972 to be further worked on and implemented by a standing committee consisting of one member from each of the six regions of the world with the General Secretary and the Chairman.

Chairman Dr. R. Shaul, USA; Vice Chairman Dr. Samuel Parmar, India; Asia Secretaries, Mr. Moonkyu Kang, Rev. David Swain, and Rev. S. N. Sugunanathan were present for the meeting among others.

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This was the first major meeting of the WSCF as a world body to be held in eastern Asia since the General Committee met in Peking in 1922.

VENTURE FOR DISCUSSION FOR CHURCH COOPERATION IN HONG KONG

HONG KONG - A "fresh interest in Church cooperation and union" is reported in Hong Kong where clergy and laity from five churches came together for discussion which took place at the United Methodist Conference meeting there from July 1-3.

Dr. Peter Wong, Church of Christ in China and EACC Treasurer, and Rev. Wong Tsok of the Chinese Methodist Church and Bishop Gilbert Baker of the Anglican Church were among those who spoke on a panel chaired by Bishop T. Otto Nall of the United Methodist Church.

Stress was made of the importance of indigenous, self-reliant and self-supporting leadership as well as of the community interests which are increasingly drawing denominations together. However, the path to union, according to Bishop Baker, "is to be sought not with debates on organization, but with prayer and liturgy. I do not think we have pursued this line far enough, nor have we been able to share our deeper experience of Christ in whom our unity lies."

One significant cooperative venture which is taking shape in Hong Kong is the new United Christian Hospitals. A board of fifteen directors, eight from the Hong Kong Christian Council and seven from the community at large, is supervising the projects. The substructure of the first building is to be completed in August.

It is in the new city of Kwun Tong, east of Kowloon and is scheduled to be finished for occupancy late in 1972. The hospital will be situated close to several bus routes and within walking distance of the homes of 300,000 people. Six and one-half acres of land was handed over to the Hong Kong Christian Council in February and the foundation stone laid in April. Gifts for the hospital are coming in from many local people outside the Christian fellowship.

A five-pronged outreach plan of nursing, medicine, child health, industrial health plan and provision for care and health education is being planned by experts in health, welfare and education.

"We plan to build not just a hospital of concrete and steel, but a healthy community of half a million people filled with new life." says Edward H. Paterson, Medical Director of the United Christian Hospitals.

EACC SENDS TEAM TO EAST PAKISTAN

EACC - Following up the visit of Dr. M. Harun, an Asian Christian Service volunteer, and as recommended by him, EACC is looking into the possibility of offering a team of volunteers to be placed at the disposal of relief agencies in East Pakistan and with the blessing of the churches, particularly in rendering aid to those who may not be readily reached in the outlying districts.

Dr. M. Harun, after consultations and interviews with governmental, UN and EACC members in East Pakistan in June, had suggested this.

The team visiting Dacca from July 31 to August 7 is made up of Rev. Larry Cheah, Youth Secretary of EACC; Rev. Demak Hutagalung of the Batak Church in Indonesia; and Madame Liu Kwi Yoot, a senior public health nurse and sister-tutor in charge of the training programme of the Family Planning Association of Malaysia. While all team members will regroup at Bangkok during the first week-end in August, Rev. Hutagalung will return again to East Pakistan to be posted there for ecumenical services particularly among the members of the rising generation. East Pakistan Christian Council had undertaken to provide housing for him.

The three EACC visitors will discuss with relevant agencies the establishment of a volunteer team and will seek to identify the nature and opportunities of service to meet the needs of the rising generation. In the meantime in a response to a communication from EACC General Secretary, Dr. El Tawil, representative of the UN Secretary General, underlined that the final tonnage appeal for food grains had not been set and that the WHO team had reported a definite shortage of various drugs and medical supplies in both public and private hospitals and clinics.

BRIEFS . . .

FIRST SECRETARY OF CHURCH OF NORTH INDIA TAKES OFFICE

INDIA - Mr. A. C. Dharmaraj, the first General Secretary of the Church of North India, takes office today at the temporary headquarters of the Church located at the National Christian Council Lodge, Nagpur. Mr. Dharmaraj, formerly of the staff of NCC India, takes over from Rev. C. C. Pande, who had served as the Secretary of the Negotiating Committee since 1967. Other new officers of the Church of North India are: Bishop Nasir, Moderator; Bishop Bhandare, Deputy Moderator; and Treasurer, Rev. Fasnacht. The inaugural meetings of the Church were held at Nagpur during the last two days of November last year while the first Synod was held April 20-24 this year at Jullundur. The first Executive Committee meeting was held at Calcutta last week.

BERNARDEZ TO BURMA

TOKYO - Mr. Mathew Ogawa, in his capacity as the Secretary of the Communication Committee of the EACC has announced that Mr. Constantino E. Bernardez, Executive Director of South East Asia Radio Voice will be going to Burma sometime in October to assist the Christian Radio-Audio Visual Aids Committee of the Burma Christian Council. While there he will give training on drama and script writing for radio programmes. A seven-day training workshop on these and related subjects had been planned to be held at Rangoon.

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** Rt. Rev. D. J. Amabalavarar took office in July to serve as Bishop of the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India (CSI) in Ceylon. Former bishop of the Diocese, Rt. Rev. Kulandran was among those who took part in the consecration of the new CSI Bishop, the first to take place in Ceylon. Roman Catholic Bishop Gomis, auxiliary to the Cardinal Archbishop of Jaffna also attended the ceremonies.

** The Executive Committee meeting of the Asian Church Women's Conference, proposed to meet at Bangkok from July 28-30 was postponed until November, according to a recent communication from Mrs. Shanti Solomon, the Executive Secretary.

** Hong Kong's Urban Industrial Mission has recently chosen a new Chairman for the Christian Industrial Committee--Dr. L. K. Ding, a Methodist Layman. He is currently serving as a member of the Medical Committee of the EACC.

** The National Council of Churches of Indonesia (DGI) had transmitted a sum equivalent of two hundred and fifty dollars to the EACC, Bangkok, as a contribution toward the Asian Christian Service (ACS). Churches in Indonesia had also contributed personnel to carry the service efforts of ACS in Laos and Vietnam.

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